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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 006991

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: ANKARA PUK REP REPORTS TALABANI STILL INSISTS ON DELAY IN KURDISH ELECTIONS, DENIES PLANS FOR KRG REFERENDUM ON INDEPENDENCE

REF: A. ANKARA 6946

Classified By: Political Military Counselor Timothy A. Betts. Reasons 1 .4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) PolMilOffs met Dec. 15 with Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Ankara representative Bahros Galali to discuss our concerns about Kurdish calls for a delay in governorate council elections in Kirkuk. Galali asked if the elections would take place as originally planned if the Kurds did not participate; PolMilOff emphasized that USG, the IIG, and the IECI believe elections should take place everywhere in the country on time.

¶2. (C) During the conversation, Galali's cellular phone rang and, after a brief conversation in Kurdish, Galali hung up and indicated that it was PUK President Jalal Talabani, who advised him to tell us that the PUK will boycott governorate council elections in Kirkuk until Article 58 of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) is implemented in Kirkuk. According to Galali, Talabani told him that agreeing to participate in the election before this would signal PUK approval for the Arabization of Kirkuk. PolMiloff emphasized that the outcome of the elections would not determine the outcome of the Article 58 process.

¶3. (C) PolMilOff indicated to Galali that we have heard reports that the Kurdish Regional Government might hold a referendum on independence during Jan. 30 elections (see reftel). Galali denied hearing of any such plan, and said that PUK would never seek such a referendum without first consulting the USG.

¶4. (C) Comment: As evidenced by our previous experience and by his apparently receiving a phone call from Talabani during our conversation, Galali is well plugged into the PUK leadership. It would appear, therefore, that the idea of an independence referendum may be a KDP gambit (see reftel), and not supported by the PUK. End comment.

¶5. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

EDELMAN